

Submitter:

Laurie Roe

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB210

Dear Chair Jama and Members of the Senate Rules Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed legislation that would eliminate Oregon's vote-by-mail system in favor of mandatory in-person voting. As an Oregon resident, I have experienced firsthand the benefits of our current vote-by-mail system, which has been in place since 2000 and has significantly increased voter participation and engagement. This included a time in my life when I experienced a sustained period of physical disability. My ability to securely and conveniently vote by mail maintained my dignity and did not single me out as a person with a disability requiring an accommodation to exercise my rights. Removing vote by mail as the primary voting method in our great state will limit access and create barriers for Oregonian's who desire to fulfill their civic duty including:

Impact on Voter Turnout

Transitioning to an exclusively in-person voting system risks disenfranchising many voters. Studies have shown that vote-by-mail increases voter participation by making the process more accessible, especially for those with mobility challenges, demanding work schedules, or caregiving responsibilities. Eliminating this option could lead to a decrease in voter turnout, undermining the democratic process.

Disenfranchisement of Vulnerable Populations

Mandatory in-person voting disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, including the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and those living in rural areas with limited access to polling stations. These groups may face significant barriers to reaching polling locations, effectively stripping them of their right to vote.

Security and Integrity of Elections

Oregon's vote-by-mail system has proven to be secure and reliable. Ballots are mailed to registered voters, who can take the time to make informed decisions before returning them through secure methods. The system includes measures such as signature verification to ensure the integrity of each vote. Transitioning to in-person voting does not inherently increase security and may introduce new challenges, such as ensuring adequate polling station resources and managing long lines, which can deter voters.

Cost Implications

Implementing mandatory in-person voting would likely result in increased costs for the state. Expenses associated with staffing polling stations, securing voting equipment, and managing the logistics of Election Day operations could surpass the costs currently incurred with the vote-by-mail system. These additional financial burdens may not yield a corresponding benefit in electoral integrity or public confidence.

Conclusion

Oregon's vote-by-mail system has served our state well, promoting higher voter turnout, ensuring accessibility, and maintaining election security. Mandating in-person voting would reverse these gains, disenfranchising many and imposing unnecessary costs. I urge you to oppose this legislation and to continue supporting voting methods that uphold the principles of accessibility, security, and inclusivity in our democratic process.

Thank you for considering my perspective.

Sincerely,

Laurie A. Roe

1104 SW Sylvia Street
Corvallis, OR 97333
laurieroe@comcast.net
503-932-1800